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## SUPPORT TROOPS WITH V CORPS' 1ST ARMORED DIVISION TRAIN FOR WIDE RANGE OF MISSIONS

**By Petra Roberts**

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**GIESSEN, Germany** -- The "Gators" of V Corps' Company A, 501st Forward Support Battalion, know their jobs may take them to places where they will be required to conduct the full spectrum of combat service support operations. But they say they're ready.



PETRA ROBERTS  
Soldiers of V Corps' Company A, 501st Forward Support Battalion, learn how to properly hook up cargo to a Black Hawk helicopter.

And the company's recent Iron Warrior task and life support mission training helped Gator Soldiers hone the skills needed to stay ready and fully support the 1st Armored Division's 1st Brigade.

That training included skills such as communication; nuclear, biological and chemical classes; the handling and

employment of Claymore mines and hand grenades, and more.

During their week of training at the Butzbach training area the Gators -- particularly those new to the unit -- learned hands-on lessons from their comrades who had already served in Iraq.

The new troops may have found some of the training unexpected -- such as teaching Soldiers how to deal with civilians protesting against an American presence in their country -- but the unit's veterans say they're very real.

For that drill the Gators received special training support from a group of teenagers living in the Roman Way Housing area in Butzbach who dressed up as protesting Iraqis.

The training was aimed at teaching Soldiers to remain calm and not to become subject to provocation.

"These are situations we actually encountered a lot when we were deployed," said 1st Sgt. Luis Gonzalez.

In addition to the exercises, the Gators also conducted helicopter sling load training. As the helicopter used in the training hovered at what seemed to be just a few feet off the ground, Soldiers learned how to safely and properly hook up cargo to it.

"This is excellent training for the Soldiers, getting them ready for deployment," said Gonzales. "If a tank, for instance, needs a new engine, we take it to them by helicopter. Every Soldier has to know exactly what to do to support that important mission."

"In combat, tanks and other elements of the brigade cannot do without this air support," added Maj. David Wilson, the battalion's executive officer. "It makes the mission easier, faster and safer."

"This virtual, real-life combat replication training is conducted the same way as it would be done in combat," said Wilson. "You clear the area for the helicopter, secure it and create a safe zone for the operation."

"This training is exciting," said Spc. Nathan Nance. "When you have to actually do this in a combat situation, you will feel safe and know that you can do it."

2nd Lt. Miklos Vajda coordinated the training and operated the pick-up zone control station, guiding the pilots and instructing the Soldiers.

"When we were deployed not only did we transport needed parts and supply material, but also the Soldiers' mail," said Vajda. "That was truly a boost of morale for the Soldiers."

And the training itself seemed to be a boost for the troops as well.

"I really enjoyed these last days of training," said Spc. Karly Fewins. "There is nothing like the rush of adrenaline when you hear these engines, especially the engines of tanks. I love it. This kind of training makes my day worthwhile."

